CW5.7 – Historical Interpretation: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting the war change over time? (p. 1 of 3)

Directions: You have been considering the question, “Why did Lincoln fight?” as you analyzed excerpts from five of his speeches. You have seen that he did not always state the same reason or reasons for fighting the war, but that his reasons changed over time (that is, as time went on, Lincoln stated different reasons.) Now that you have evidence from five speeches in order, spread out over the length of the war, the focus question changes to: “How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting the war change over time?” When historians interpret change over time, they look at what was said in the beginning, when and how it changed, and what was said at the end.

In order to answer this question, you have to make an interpretation. An interpretation is an educated opinion, your opinion based on the evidence (from the speeches.) There is no one right interpretation, but an interpretation is wrong if the evidence does not support it, or if some evidence contradicts it. Like a main idea or thesis, an interpretation is a general statement only one or two sentences long.

Part A: Making an Interpretation: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting change over time?

Here are three “interpretation starters.” Discuss them with your group, select the starter that best fits your interpretation, and fill in the blanks. Then write your interpretation in the space below.

A. In the beginning, Lincoln argued that the reason for fighting was ________________________________, but by the end of the war, his reason(s) had changed to _________________________________.

B. In all of his speeches, Lincoln had the same reason(s) for fighting the war, which was _________________________________.

C. In the beginning, Lincoln argued that the reason for fighting was ________________________________, but by the end of the war, he added a reason(s), which was (were) _________________________________.

Focus Question: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting change over time?

Interpretation: ________________________________
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**Part B: Selecting Evidence**

You need evidence to support your interpretation. For a change-over-time interpretation, historians usually give evidence from (1) the beginning, (2) the point of change, and (3) the end. They choose the best pieces of evidence to support their interpretation. Use this evidence gathering chart to record and analyze three pieces of evidence that support your interpretation.

### EVIDENCE GATHERING CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVIDENCE</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
<th>RELEVANCE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
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</table>
| **Beginning:**  
What was Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war in the beginning?  
(House Divided or First Inaugural) | | | |
| **Point of Change:**  
When and how did Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war change? | | | |
| **End:**  
What was Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war in the end?  
(Gettysburg Address & Second Inaugural) | | | |

*Use “quotation” marks  
Use ellipses (…) to take out parts of sentences*
Part C: Response from Historical Figure

Decide which document would be most important to your historical figure. Write a letter, diary entry, or speech describing, from your figure's point of view, how he or she would feel or react after hearing about Lincoln's speech.
CW5.7K - Historical Interpretation: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting the war change over time? Key (p. 1 of 2)

Part A: Making an Interpretation: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting change over time?

Because of the nature of interpretation, student answers will vary considerably. The best option is C, but allow variation, as long as the students understand the main concept. If re-teaching is needed, post a few student interpretations (anonymously) on the board, and ask students how they might be improved. Incorporate good suggestions into the interpretation on the board.

A. In the beginning, Lincoln argued that the reason for fighting was ________________, but by the end of the war, his reason(s) had changed to ________________.

B. In all of his speeches, Lincoln had the same reason(s) for fighting the war, which was ________________

C. In the beginning, Lincoln argued that the reason for fighting was to preserve the Union, but by the end of the war, he added a reason, which was to end slavery.

Another possible reason: to honor the dead soldiers.

Focus Question: How did Lincoln’s reasons for fighting change over time?

Interpretation: In the beginning, Lincoln argued that the reason for fighting was to preserve the Union, but by the end of the war, he added a reason, which was to end slavery.
### Part B: Selecting Evidence

The evidence that students select will vary also. Sharing good evidence, analysis and relevance examples with the class (student work shown anonymously) can reinforce this concept.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use “quotation” marks Use ellipses (…) to take out parts of sentences</td>
<td>What does this mean? <em>This means that ... (explanation of evidence)</em></td>
<td>How does this support your interpretation? <em>This relates to ______ (interpretation) because ...</em></td>
<td>Write down your citation information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning:</strong> What was Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war in the beginning? (House Divided or First Inaugural)</td>
<td>“…I shall have the most solemn one [oath] to preserve, protect, and defend it [the government].”</td>
<td>This means that Lincoln thought it was his sacred duty to save the Union.</td>
<td>First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1861)</td>
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<td><strong>Point of Change:</strong> When and how did Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war change?</td>
<td>“…all persons held as slaves ... shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free...”</td>
<td>This means that Lincoln was freeing the slaves in the Confederacy.</td>
<td>Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End:</strong> What was Lincoln’s reason(s) for fighting the war in the end? (Gettysburg Address &amp; Second Inaugural)</td>
<td>“...that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom...”</td>
<td>This means that winning the war will bring freedom to the slaves and make a better United States.</td>
<td>Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863)</td>
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### Part C: Response from Historical Figure

Student responses will vary. The two key points are that the students interpret Lincoln’s perspective correctly and that they can articulate their historical figure’s perspective (in reaction) correctly.